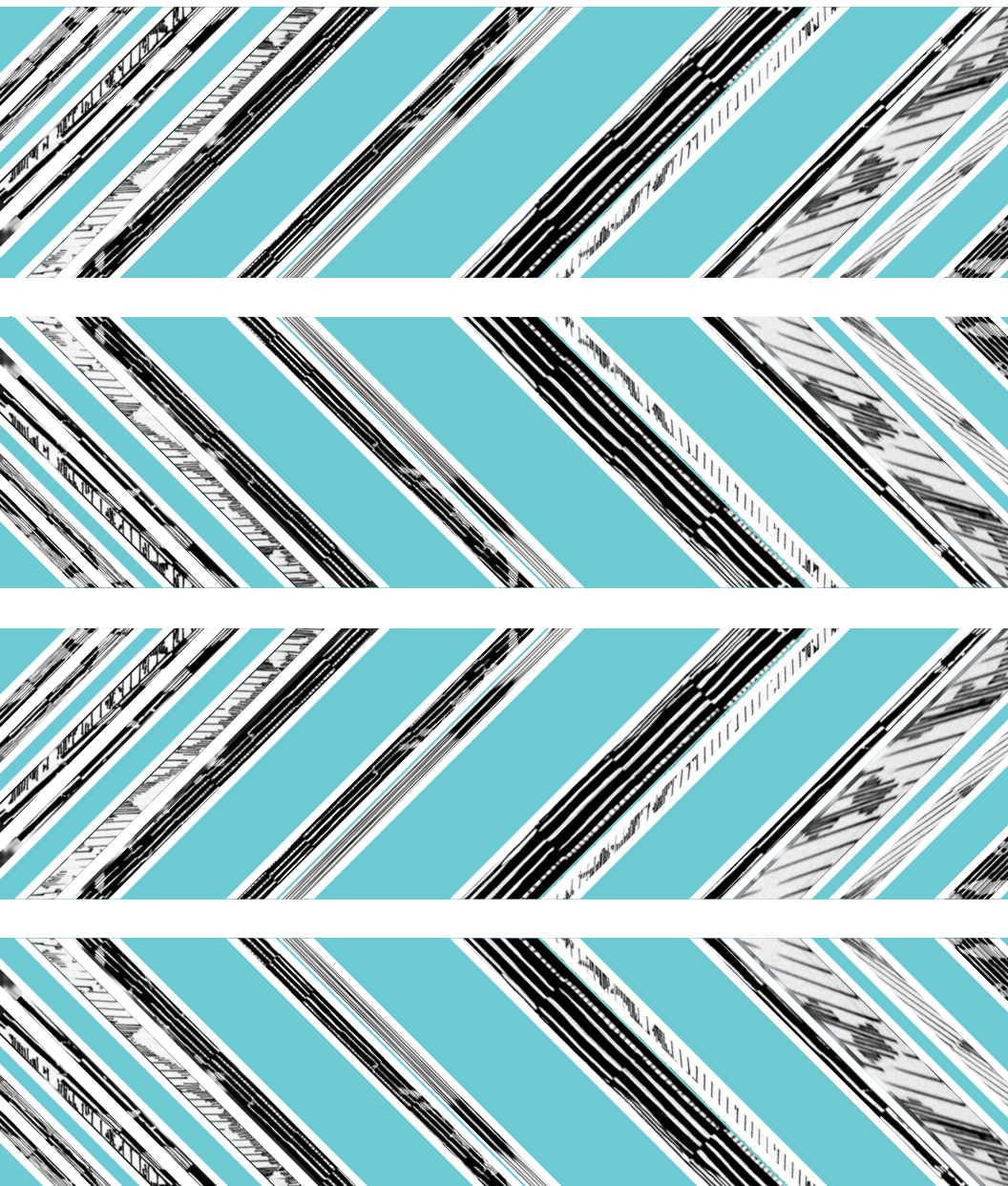
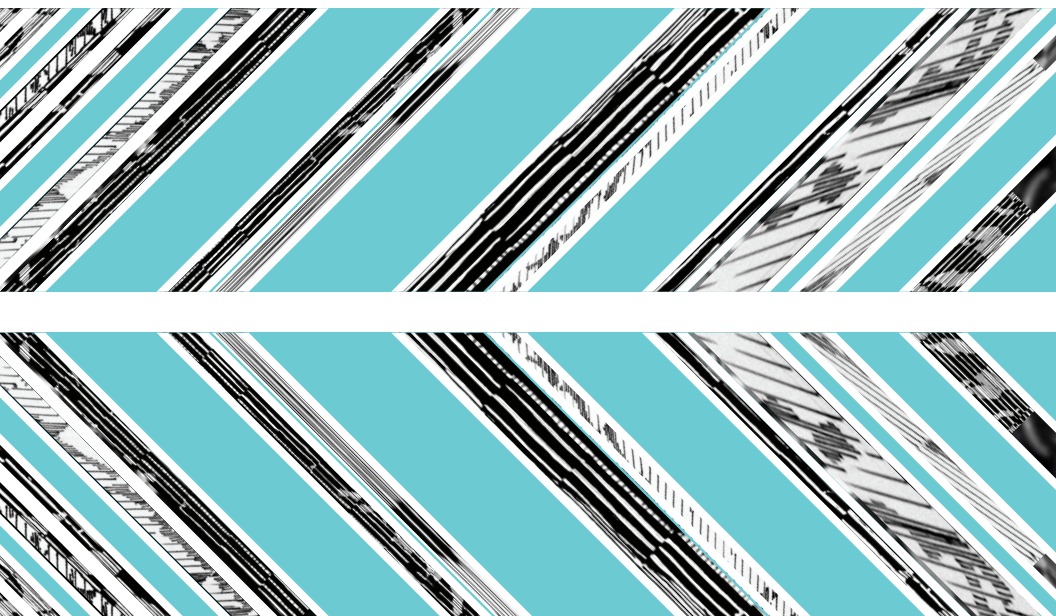


# reflection

gonzaga's art and literature publication | fall 2012



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# reflection staff

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*Reflection* staff would like to thank everyone who participated in the literary and visual arts community on campus by submitting to the journal. Joanne Shiosaki and Chris Wheatley deserve our praise for facilitating an instructive and positive experience.

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## *Over Easy, Caitlin LeBrun*

Leonard walked slowly into the diner, every other shuffle in tune with the ticking of his wrist watch. His steps dragged along the '60's carpet, glacial in pace and stubborn in resolve against using the metal cage of a walker. He took off his hat, nodding towards David behind the counter. He winked at Sheila, a sly grin drawing up the curtains of his weathered skin for one warm moment. His glasses, thick and spotless, glinted in the light the shades allowed. She smiled back and flipped over a coffee mug, saying, "Just in time. I got a fresh pot brewing for you." He thanked her and sat down, resting his coat on the seat next to him and placing his hands on the counter. It was still wet from the rag she had cleaned it with.

Leonard's daily walk to the diner, a four block marathon of cracked sidewalks and unpainted fences always took place when his jam and toast had dissolved from his stomach. Every morning he'd find the growling of his belly chiming along with the quarter till sigh of the grandfather clock. He'd grab his khaki coat from its hook on the back of the door, slipping his wallet into one of the deep pockets, where it would land next to the peppermints he never ate but liked to hear click as he walked. He'd put on his fishing hat, the one without the pins, and after lightly adjusting the front and the back, would make his way



out the door. He never locked it and never thought twice.

David headed to the grill, putting on his gloves and hat as he called over his shoulder, “How do you want your egg today?”

“What?” Leonard called back.

“How do you want your egg today?”

“Over easy’ll do, thanks.” A fresh mug of coffee sat in front of him now, steam pouring over top to dance in the air. The hot cup felt good curled around his right hand, his left resting familiarly in his pocket. He looked to the front of the diner, where the huge window faced the street and the cars rolled by, mini vans bound for the grocery store and sedans in no hurry mostly. A woman jogged by with a friend, pushing a stroller. Leonard watched as a fall wind picked up a pile of leaves in the yard across the street, blowing them indecisively around and around and around. David slid his burger, no lettuce, extra onion, over-easy egg on top across the counter, wiping his hands with a rag as he asked, “Anything else, Len?”

Leonard, whose left hand had been deep in his pocket, next to the peppermints and the wallet, fingers encircling an empty, ancient cigarette case, stopped rubbing his thumb across a message carved into the side. To L, With Love P had worn down almost completely, but his fingers still felt the spot, needing the indentation of letters as much as a sighted man needs braille. Both hands now free, he reached for the ketchup, and grey eyes sparkling behind the lenses and the coffee steam, lied “Nothing else, kid. Thanks.”

## Medium Rare, Lindsay Waltner

Andrea stood paralyzed at the top of the stairs. A sleek black sign swung in a light breeze over her head. Tracks of rain slid over the silver letters reading “Brier.” It was just another restaurant, she reminded herself. With the first step down, her knees buckled and she scraped her hand against the brick wall in an attempt to keep from tumbling down. She hesitated, an image of being picked up from an unceremonious heap at the bottom by a sullen hostess flashed through her mind. She took another tenuous step. It wasn’t until she reached the bottom of the stairs that she realized she had been holding her breath. Andrea caught a flash of her reflection in the window of the door as it opened. She had spent an hour in front of the mirror smoothing every flyaway with a flat iron, but the mist had rendered her hair unrecognizable. Just what she needed: to show up looking like a well-dressed crack whore.

*If you’re lucky enough to be in on the secret (which, congratulations you all now are) you will find Brier to be a breath of fresh air, despite the fact that it is practically underground.*

The hostess greeted Andrea with a flashbulb smile and led her to a small table. Andrea slid into a chair and laid her notebook on the table beside her, filling her hands, instead with a menu. Before opening it, she took notes of her surroundings. Cityscapes spray painted on canvas, sprung from the brick walls

and brought the street inside, reminding diners that they were literally submerged in the city. It was still early and the restaurant was virtually empty. Andrea always tried to arrive early, before the frantic hum of the dinner rush. She liked to experience the servers at their best, then sit and watch while they became their worst. Normally she wasn't one to look for failure, but today she had considered showing up late.

A waitress sauntered up to her table. Andrea saw her eyes dart to the notebook. He would know she was here now. She ordered a ginger soda and the assorted crostini appetizer, and the waitress rushed off with greater enthusiasm than she had shown on approach. The tables slowly began to fill around her. Andrea noticed that they were primarily occupied by simpering couples bent low over glasses of wine to admire one another in the fluttering candle light. Unabashed romance with an edge; this place was Nick to a tee. Andrea felt a flame flicker in the pit of her stomach. The plate of crostini mercifully appeared on the table.

*Slices of grilled baguette arrive artfully arranged beside four small dishes of perfectly orchestrated flavor combinations. The eclectic simplicity of the food at Brier will delight the famished and foodies alike.*

She stacked the first slice with roasted pear, prosciutto and balsamic vinegar. Next came olive tapenade and fresh arugula. Then shaved beets with goat cheese and walnuts. Andrea looked at the last dish. She felt a lump in her throat that had nothing to do with what she had just swallowed. Slices of pickles lay like petals around a spoonful of peanut butter. This was not on the menu. It was a signal. He was trying to get under her skin.

—

“That’s the most disgusting thing I’ve ever seen,” Nick said as Andrea scooped peanut butter onto a dill pickle she had just fished out of the glass jar, “You critique food for a living. How can you possibly enjoy that?”

“Says the guy who smears duck liver on toast,” Andrea said licking pickle juice from her fingers.

“You love duck liver on toast.”

“It’s my job.”

---

Andrea fixed her eyes on the kitchen door. It swung open as a waitress bustled out, plates balanced on both arms. For a second, she could have sworn she caught a glimpse of his self-satisfied smirk from within, but the door had already slammed shut.

Earlier that afternoon, after a particularly sour meeting with her editor, Andrea ate lunch with Sophie from Style.

“He thinks it will be a great color piece. Like I’m going to pour my heart into it or something. It’s just a fucking review.” Andrea stabbed at the olive in her salad with transferred malice and it plopped off her plate into her lap.

“Clearly.”

“I mean I work in food and wine for Christ’s sake.”

“I’m sure Carl doesn’t expect you to put yourself in the article. He’s probably just looking for a new angle.”

“I’m doing it because it’s my job, but I won’t give him the satisfaction.”

“Carl? Or Nick?”

Andrea didn’t answer. She was relieved to hear Sophie speak again.

“Want to split dessert?”

“I have to be hungry tonight, remember?”

“You’re always hungry.”

*Dinner at Brier is not complete without a doughnut. Don’t worry; these are not your Sunday-morning stale inner-tubes. Once you try one of the distinctive seasonal flavors, you will never be able to return to the glass case. Just to be safe, you might want to start with dessert.*

Andrea’s fork paused over the golden crust. The aroma of Tahitian vanilla and lavender wafted up from her plate. The

steam turned to sweat along her hairline.

---

“Now you’re just showing off,” Andrea said. Her legs stuck out from the bottom of Nick’s blue shirt and hung off the bar stool. He stood at the stove fishing a perfectly fried doughnut out of a pot of bubbling oil.

“Usually guys just make pop-tarts.”

“Clearly you’ve never dated a chef,” Nick said, setting a plate down in front of her.

---

She couldn’t seem to move from the chair. It was as if her skirt had melted into the plastic and they had become a single amorphous entity. She watched the door to the kitchen. Every time a waitress flung it open, her stomach burned.

“Can I get you anything else?” The waitress was clearly getting tired of this game. The restaurant was practically empty. “No thanks,” Andrea said. She took one last look at the kitchen door before turning to leave.

Andrea slipped outside. Reaching the sidewalk was like resurfacing for air. She walked to the corner trying to ignore the prickle of thorns in the back of her eyes.

*Nick Brier has triumphed with his debut restaurant. It is safe to say he will soon blossom into one of the premiere chefs.*

---

She seemed to feel him there before she noticed him. He was leaning against a wall by the alley a few feet away. His white chef’s coat was unbuttoned and a lit cigarette glowed between his fingers. He stepped away from the wall when he saw her. She walked toward him, painfully aware of the clap of her pumps on the sidewalk.

“I was wondering how long it’d take you to get here.” He offered her a cigarette, shielding the pack from the rain with his hand. “You look great, by the way.”

“I’m done taking notes. You don’t have to butter me up

anymore.” She stepped under the small overhang and pressed up against the cement wall. He hadn’t changed at all. As she held up the cigarette for him to light, she saw his eyes linger on her hand. Her ring, artfully fashioned from an old fork, seemed now to constrict around her finger making it numb. How could she have been dumb enough to wear it today?

---

“You know, normally when you give a girl a ring it’s more than just a ring. You’re lucky I know better.”

A canopy shaded a table of vegetables behind them. Andrea gripped a bag of tomatoes in one hand and held out the other. Nick slid the ring on to her thumb.

“Plus, if you proposed with a fork at a farmer’s market I might just have to say no,” Andrea said kissing him. She felt the weight of the ring as she moved to pick up a bunch of kale, watching the silver flash brilliantly against the dark green leaves.

---

The rain slowly washed the scene away and the new Nick stood dripping in front of her.

“So what’d you think?”

“Read the article and find out.” She took a drag on the cigarette. It had been four months. She pressed her back against the wall and watched the raindrops dance through the smoke.

“Pickles and peanut butter was an interesting touch. Glad to see you are getting more adventurous.” She wanted him to know he hadn’t won.

“I hoped you’d like that,” he said, “you know, it wasn’t about the review.”

“It’s always about the review,” Andrea said. It always had been.

Four months earlier, when it had finally boiled over, the knives scattered across their kitchen floor reflected the shouting match that took place above. A half empty bottle of wine and a charred hunk of meat watched from the counter. Catalysts for the inevitable.

“You made me better. I just couldn’t see it,” Nick said.

She knew it was bullshit. Just something to say. But somehow, for a second, she found herself believing it. What did it matter in the end? He dug his thorns in deep. They tangled in her hair, around her stilettos, buried themselves under her skin. Even now she could feel the sting. Andrea pressed the smoldering end of her cigarette into the concrete and crushed the butt under her toe.

“Good luck Nick.” She stepped back onto the sidewalk and felt him recede in the dark behind her.

Back in her apartment, she stared at the flashing bar on the white page in front of her. The images of the restaurant, the taste of the food, the ambiance all seemed to have disappeared into a cloud of smoke. A brown paper take-out box sat on the table next to her laptop. She reached for it. Inside, was a half eaten steak. A charred crust encircled a delicate pink center. A pool of blood had drained into the box. The smell of cigarettes lingered on her fingers. For once, she didn’t feel like eating.

*Blink twice while walking down Madison and you just might miss it. Only weeks after opening, Brier has already begun to develop a mythic reputation. Even before I walk inside, I can feel the glares of the faithful patrons watching me over their glasses of Pinot Noir. I am about to reveal the best kept secret in town.*

## *Noli Me Tangere, Haley Swanson*

Even when the air is hot, the glass is cool. Outside, the sun beats down, hampered only by an occasional, halfhearted puff of wind. Inside, the steady hum of the air-conditioning sputters and clicks into silence. I run my chipped nails over the windowsill. It's sticky with multiple layers of paint, brush indentations running parallel like vacuum marks in carpet. Thumbnail digs into sill. A small half moon intersecting the brush lines that dip and swerve but always maintain the same distance from each other. Affected symmetry.

Dirt clouds the pane's corners while the center wears dripping stains from spring's drizzles. Glass is clean when it's new; rain is clear when it falls. Earth riding the breeze coats the pane in a fine layer of brown. As water touches glass the clear bulb clouds and runs.

"Impatiens are the easiest to keep alive," my mother told me as her spade cut into the moist dirt. A spring many drizzles ago. Outside my stained looking glass the breeze ruffles these upturned blooms. They line the sidewalk decorated in



dappled sunlight—fuchsia, coral, pale pink and flaming red.

The surface of impatien petals is water resistant. If you study a bloom, the protective coating appears as iridescent thread sewn into the base color. I remember sitting cross-legged on the back porch as my mother planted, plucking their petals and rubbing the smooth, rubber-like surface between thumb and forefinger. The grooves and indentations of human skin appear miniscule to our eyes. But they are rough, relentless, cavernous valleys to the helpless petal.

Small air bubbles are trapped under the surface of impatien leaves. When immersed in water the leaves shine silver as the delicately threaded petal underbellies drown. The exposed surfaces are armed, the insides left to fend alone.

When this window is stained again, the impatiens will let the clear droplets roll off onto the concrete, small dark spots in the grey sidewalk, until vulnerable petal undersides are lapped gently by mud. The flower refuses the water for fear of drowning; the hard concrete accepts it for fear of drought.

Dried bean husks skirt the border between flower and sidewalk, dropped from the full boughs of the overhanging tree. Its leaves mimic a maple's, some borders already twinged with orange. More will drop, replacing the husks of spring with brown leaves, once flaming branches.

Soon the drops will hit with more force, when upturned leaf palms don't shield summer's light sprinkles. When the drizzles come the branches will be bare, save a few hesitant green buds. Maybe the rain will strip winter's branches of tiny, new leaves—beginnings falling on flowerbeds, scattered onto the sidewalk. No extra protection for the impatiens.

"The easiest to keep alive," my mother always said. Bean husks, fall leaves, spring drizzles. This day, with the slanted sunlight illuminating the imperfections of both windowsill and pane, is the perfect day for impatiens. No drizzle, no falling leaves. Only a light breeze to dry the dampness of their vulnerable underbellies.

As a child I thought the name of these iridescent, repellent blooms was 'impatiens,' believing their rapid growth

alluded to an impatient nature.

I first met these flowerbeds two falls ago as I crushed their petals beneath my feet. Then, I was a child. A child too impatient to walk around the flowerbed. A child impatient for impending adulthood. Only a child yearns for the unhampered downpour of reality.

There was no extra protection for my tender youth. No water resistant threads to sew strength through my veins. Only rain and thumb and forefinger rubbing my skin raw. I can still feel the velvety bloom smoothed by my child thumb, now scarring a windowsill.

Impatiens are also called ‘touch-me-nots,’ derived from the Latin phrase ‘noli me tangere.’ This is translated from a Greek phrase meaning, ‘stop clinging to me.’ Both are found in the Gospel according to John when Mary Magdalene meets Jesus after his resurrection.

“Noli me tangere,” Jesus said.

“Noli me tangere,” say the impatiens.

“Noli me tangere,” I repeat, standing up, and walking outside where full-bellied, grey clouds begin to gather.

## *After, Jacey Fink*

I don't move. Sleeping, sleeping.  
In out goes the air. In out the nose.  
In out goes the chest. I imagine my breasts  
are cut with clean Xs for nipples.  
I roll over on my man chest. In out  
goes the air. In out go the blades  
cutting my chest. In out go the scissors  
cutting my hair.

I don't cry. Dreaming, dreaming.  
In out goes the air. In out the window.  
In out goes the door. I imagine my room  
is locked with prison bars for fun.  
I roll over on my striped sheets. In out  
goes the air. In out go the guards  
watching my sheets. In out go the people  
watching me sleep.


I explode. Sleeping, dreaming.  
In out goes me. In out the chest, the door.  
In out goes the me. I imagine my body  
is cutting through the bars of air.  
I roll. In out goes the me, in and out and  
over the air. In out go the blades of guards  
cutting my hair. In out go the people  
watching me lie.

*Gabriel's Hymn,  
Erin Dempsey*

I prophesy

From the dusty wilderness of  
The corkboard square she pinned me to:  
Next to and off the map  
Which tracks  
In white string and orange tacks  
The route  
A yellow star paperclip  
Settling above  
Each port  
Announcing his arrival.

I: the harbinger from  
Cape Town.



It was like Advent,  
Sitting in her tiny campus mailbox,  
Waiting for the seraphic chorus  
Of key's teeth chattering into keyhole.

I could've glowed  
In her smooth hands:  
Nail-bitten more than usual  
For reasons obvious and unknown.

How blessed to be a herald of the  
Good News!,  
Gabriel's hymn:

“Everything is beautiful here:  
You'd fit right in.”

## *Blackbird, Jacey Fink*

You are exhausted of  
whistling.  
Breach your delivery,

you understand you are a painter,  
contributing to your canvas sky.  
Bird of all black, you beg a beginning,  
swooping to scoop celebratory servings  
of grapefruit, to sugar the eyes of viewers,  
coaxing the colors into dawn and

delicately arranging bright and blue,  
revealing an unknown but universal truth.

The brown branch is your brush  
as you shyly pause for approval from  
a placid mentor, the one who knows  
the crawling of the world,  
to complete your masterpiece  
and the appearance of the sun  
to burst its peel with juice,  
to splatter the day with light.

*Arc, Wenyu Zhang*

It's the way your neck cranes.  
As if a thin string, lifts  
the harbor of your collarbone.  
As a moon far away tugs  
the tide of your breasts. I can almost  
feel the shore water

drip off my ankles.

## *Morning Lake, Kevin P. Carroll*

The honey colored sun wakes,  
Rising through the early dawn,  
Suspended above a morning fog.

Cold air rests on the lake,  
A friend to the morning dew  
And sweet reprieve from the days' heat.

Pit pat pit pat – drops descend from above.  
Melodious and natural,  
A first song of the world.

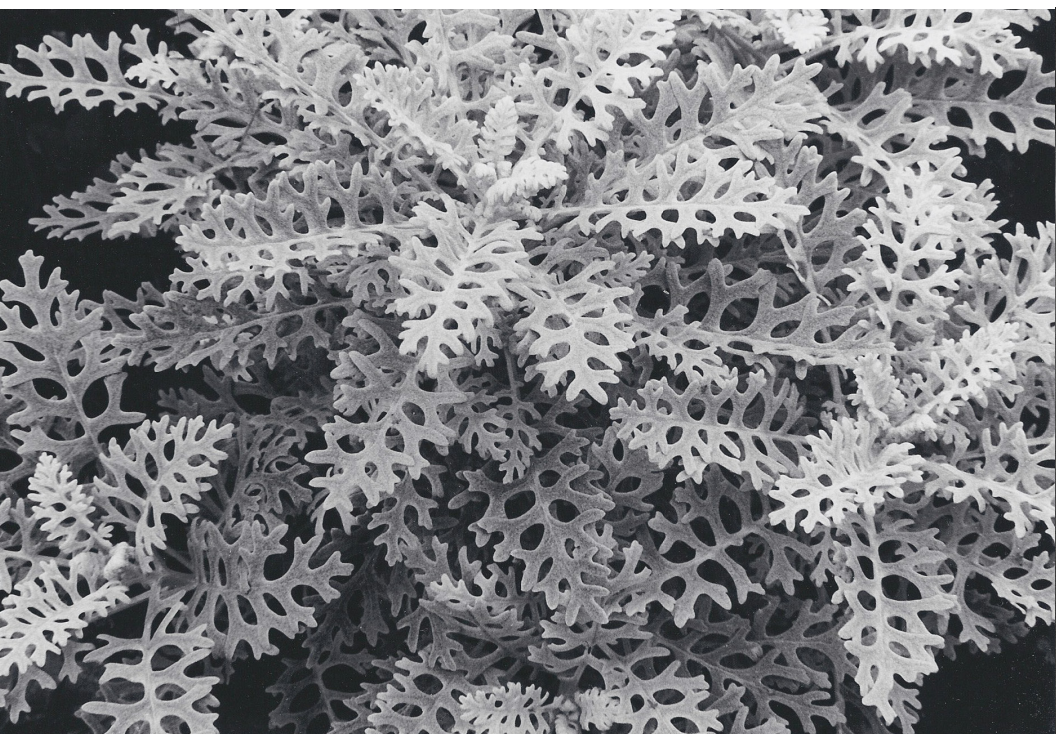
Listen, and can you hear them?  
The birds? They call to each other,  
Peck at wood and search  
For their own meals.

It is but the beginning of the day  
Yet already a world of its own  
Has sprung to life, almost silent,  
In this hidden sanctuary.



*heart shaped sunglasses,  
Torrey Smith*

above the blistering telephone wires,  
her hair is pulled in a fit of frenzy.  
the sun aligning designing spires.  
the remedy pipe aflame with envy.  
the tea she sips warms her fingers, her spine,  
though the fields of facts may always vary  
they wrap around each other, knotted twine.  
within themselves the problems they bury.  
head to mouth to heart, velvet stockings ripped,  
umbrellas float above spray-painted walls,  
frayed highlighted pages bring forth conflict  
he asked 'did we dream too fast?' she recalls  
beginning to feel worthwhile again,  
finding his grasp where when and only then.



*White Leaves, Aeryn Arquett*  
*Nikon FM10 SLR*



*Being Held, Virginia Whalen*



Above: *Coronado Bridge, Tien Butts*

*Olympus EP-1 with fisheye lens*

Opposite: *Figure Study I, Tien Butts*

*pencil and white charcoal*



# **Interview with Tiphonie Yanique**

Interviewed by Jacey Fink and Haley Swanson

Tiphonie Yanique's writing has been awarded numerous prizes in the United States and her native Caribbean. Her fiction, poetry or essays can be found in the Best African American Fiction, Transition Magazine, American Short Fiction, The London Magazine, Prism International, Callaloo, and other journals and anthologies. Her fiction collection, *How to Escape from a Leper Colony*, was published by Graywolf Press in 2010. Tiphonie teaches in the MFA School of Writing at The New School in New York City. She visited Gonzaga as part of the Visiting Writers Series, and she was kind enough to speak with members of the *Reflection* editorial staff on October 8, 2012.

JACEY FINK: So, first off, thank you for meeting with us. I know that the readers don't just read when they come here and I really appreciate meeting with you.

TIPHANIE YANIQUE: Well I'm very happy to be here. Thank you.

FINK: Ok, I just wanted to start with a few questions about writing and how you became interested in writing.

YANIQUE: Sure. That's a big, huge question. And I think writers often tell wonderful lies about where their beginnings really came from. And I'll probably tell you a lie as well. Because who knows, right, who knows where it really comes from. It probably comes from many different places. But, one place I can locate my writer's self is in my grandmother. She was a librarian, a children's librarian, on the island where I'm from, St. Thomas. And she always had books everywhere. I think a lot of grandmothers cook and bake and have lladró figurines, and my grandmother had lladró figurines, but she also had books everywhere: old, beautifully leather-bound books. We were just encouraged to really pick those books off the shelf whenever we wanted to, so I was reading unabridged versions of classics when I was really quite young. I really wanted to be a reader. I thought if I could be a reader for a living, if there was a way to do that, then that would be awesome. And it turns out that in a way, being a writer is being a reader.

HALEY SWANSON: What you said about being a writer is being a reader was beautiful. What works influenced you the most or what writers were big inspirations for you?

YANIQUE: My “momma and poppa” are Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Jamaica Kincaid. I discovered them late in college. Before that, I didn’t know that people who weren’t from Europe wrote books at all. It took me until college to discover writers from the Caribbean and writers from Latin America, and when I did I really sunk my teeth in there; I found an allegiance there. Their writing is so different: Kincaid, she doesn’t write plot at all, it’s all character and language driven. She goes deep into character; one could say all her books are about the same person. Garcia Marquez is different; his characters sort of rumble through his plots, which are really complicated, extensive and much more about community, even if it is about individuals moving through the world, it’s much more about how the world sort of moves around people. They’re really different kinds of writers; she writes little, tiny books and he writes these tomes. Her work is very feminine, what maybe some scholars might call feminine. In his writing sometimes I feel like he doesn’t know how to write women very well. And yet I still see how amazingly he addresses big social issues, and how beautiful he creates his towns, and how he writes love. I feel like they are my two most important writers. As a storyteller, my grandmother was the first person to influence me. As a children’s librarian, one of her jobs was to tell stories, which is what a children’s librarian does: the kids gather round and they tell the kids stories. She brought that skill into the home as well, so she would tell us stories. In many ways she was my first poet, my first storyteller, and the first one that really influenced my writing.

FINK: Was there someone in your life who encouraged you to become a writer or to take your writing seriously? Who kind of mentored you throughout your undergraduate years or younger?

YANIQUE: My family has always been supportive because we are a family of readers. My grandmother instilled that [love for reading] in a lot of us, especially in my aunts and my mother. My mother was a writer before me, so I’m kind of part of a lot



of teachers were really important to me. And I think family is key, but I think that teachers are an important part of the puzzle for whatever you're going to become. A teacher can destroy you or build you. I think I was very lucky that the ones that could have been destructive were not my English and writing teachers. I had supportive teachers in the humanities my whole way up who encouraged me. In fifth grade, they asked me to read in front of class and things that really made me feel like this thing that I was good at was something that was useful and important and worthy of attention and worthy of work. So I think my teachers were key and I really strive to be that same kind of teacher.

FINK: We have been discussing in one of my classes the purpose of our own writing. Why do you write? Why did you start writing, and what keeps you writing?

YANIQUE: Well, I think stemming from the mostly true story I just told you was that I wanted to read. So I really think I became a writer because I wanted to read stories that I wasn't finding out in the world. Even today, my desire to want to finish a book or finish a poem or finish a story, comes from my incredible desire to read it. I just want to look at the finished copy and be a passive participant in the finished copy. And so the initial stages of my process are writing it so I get to read it.

FINK: I know that you have your collection of stories that I've read and you also write poetry and essays. Do you feel that there's a need to define yourself as a "woman-writer-of-color," or do you think that that is not necessarily an issue to address today. How would you define yourself as a writer?

YANIQUE: This is kind of a two-part question. I think, because you're asking for first of all a genre definition and then about maybe political definitions. I think the world wants to always put you in boxes. No matter what we do, the world wants to label you, the world wants to define you, the world wants to

know how to read you, how to look at you, how to observe you. And I think genre wise that has always felt like a kind of limitation on me. I've always felt like writers were writers. Some of them are more inclined towards lyric, some are more inclined towards prose. And in my case I feel like certain characters incline me towards writing in stanza; certain characters make me want to write in paragraph. So I think for me, I'm a writer and I happen to express that in different kinds of ways. Even though I definitely acknowledge and believe that different genres ask different things of the reader, and I acknowledge that and I'm interested in the differences, but I also feel like I'm excited to participate in those differences. The political question is similar, but I almost see it as the idea of writing as a woman. Again, the world will make it boxed-in that way and sees it as a kind of subset of being a writer. "Woman-writer" seems like "writer-small," somehow. "Woman-of-color-writer" seems like even smaller, somehow. But I think that's a problem with perception and not a problem actually with the titles. I think "woman-writer" is as much universal as "male-writer" or as "writer," fuck it, just writer. You know? And I think "color-writer," "international-writer," "writer," "woman-writer-who-is-international-and-also-of-color," those things are as universal and as normative as anything else. And so I feel like actually writing inside of those we might call "labels," but finding, constantly finding, ways to make those things about the world is the way I push against the confinement of the labels, because I don't actually think that there is anything confining about being a woman, or anything confining about being a writer of color. But sometimes the world wants to make those things confinements and I fight against that perception, but not against the labels at all.

FINK: We're both taking a class right now, Studies of Woman Writers, so we're always talking about labels. Based on your reply, I take it you find the labels more limiting than empowering?

YANIQUE: Yeah, they are completely confining, but I actually think that, while it doesn't matter, it shouldn't matter, to the

reader what race or what gender or whom you have sex with or whom you don't, the reader should receive the literature as literature. I do think it matters who you are and what your experiences were. Those are going to make it easier or more challenging for you to write certain kinds of things. And also that is the truth that you draw from and your own imagination comes from, initially, your own truth. So I feel like I accept those labels, but I also want to demonstrate that those labels can be the world, if that makes sense. Give me "woman-of-color," I'll write in that box and make that box the world.

FINK: What is one of the biggest challenges as a writer you've faced so far?

YANIQUE: I feel like there are tons. I'm living my dream, so in many ways it's awesome! But I also have a son, I have a husband, I have a brother, cousins, family and those things are even more important to me than my writing. And so making sure that I honor my work in the midst of also honoring my family is probably the most difficult thing. And this is something that you will hear often from women writers, and maybe from men writers well, but it seems to be something that women writers are more inclined to say aloud or maybe are more inclined to even feel. The pull of family responsibility versus what actually feels like a pretty selfish thing like, "I'm going to write these poems," when really who the fuck cares? Nobody cares about your poems when there's a two-year-old running around. So for me that balance is the difficult balance, although I wouldn't really want it any other way.

FINK: Do you let your family read your work?

YANIQUE: Do I let them? My gosh! They do read it, because they are readers, and they are eager to see if I wrote about them, and if I made them look awesome or made them look bad. If I did write about them, they're really pissed off, or if they think it's them, they're pissed off – it's a lose-lose situation

either way. I feel gratified that they care and I feel lucky to come from a family of people who see the value of my work, but also, it's quite a burden.

FINK: What is something that you try to encourage your students to leave your classes with?

YANIQUE: I really want my students to leave my class knowing that their work is so dangerous and so vital that it can kill people or save people. I really want them to leave the classroom knowing that you write this poem and you're going to make someone fall in love, or you're going to write this poem and you're going to make someone stand up and march in the midst of conflict; that your work is going to change people's lives. I think that is what good literature can do.

FINK: Do you have a writing routine that you try to stick to?

YANIQUE: I think my situation is what really demands my routine. I teach right now at the New School, before that I taught at Drew University and I had to commute pretty far to get there from Brooklyn to New Jersey. It took me almost two hours to get to work and I would write on the train. That was my process. Now I have a two-year-old and he takes naps in the middle of the day, so I write in the middle of the day and I write when the sun is out. To me, it feels like "this is perfect, the sun is shining, it's bursting through the window. I can think that I'm in the Caribbean. I can put my headphones on and listen to Calypso and I can really re-enter my characters' lives. But then I felt the same way when I was on the train like, "I'm on the train, there's nothing around me, I don't know these people, I could be anywhere," so I feel like maybe it's the kind of person I am, it's my personality, or maybe I'm just lucky that I've been able to find a way to find escape and a routine no matter what situation I'm in. The other way is like working your life around your writing. I feel like I've been able to find a way to work writing into my life.

FINK: Our writing program here is pretty new. How important do you think an MFA program is in terms of our work?

YANIQUE: The only reason it's important is for community. I think in a writing program you get mentors and this is a good program, some programs you don't get these things and so maybe they're not worth it. A program where you have mentors, where there are actually professors, and even older students who can guide you in your craft and guide you towards professional opportunities. I think that's really key and having people who are ahead of you, people who are a couple steps behind you, is really good. You can always gauge where you've come from and where you are hoping to head. I think that's really key. I think you also learn in a community to accept criticism, which is the life of the artist. Rejection and difficult feedback, reviews where the reviewer doesn't adore everything you wrote, that's the life of any artist. So I feel that's really important to have that balance. If you don't have that, then I think it's a waste of money, but if you have that, then it's worth every penny.

FINK: Something that we've been talking about in the writing workshop, the poetry workshop, is spirituality in writing. We've read numerous articles talking about how spirituality is either fully embraced, or written off. I think that your book does a really great job not doing too much of either, but it's definitely there. I was wondering if you have thoughts about spirituality in all kinds of writing.

YANIQUE: I grew up Catholic, very Catholic: going to mass every Sunday, and I taught Sunday school. I also grew up in a household where I had an uncle who was Rastafari, which is a kind of Caribbean religion with its roots in Africa. I have an aunt who is Muslim, another aunt who is Evangelical. It turned out that even within my own family there was this great diversity of beliefs and of ways of thinking about the Divine. I found that inspiring also; it's kind of like a little microcosm of the

world. That was such a part of my life like anything else, just like washing the dishes. Knowing that my aunt wore a headscarf was normative to me. It would obviously find its way into my world, but in a grander way. I wanted this collection to be about spirituality. The opening quote that sort of launches the whole collection is a quote from a Catholic prayer. I wanted that to be this thing that threaded throughout the whole book. The prayer is from a special prayer for travelers from the patron saint of travelers and lovers. It goes, “Lead us to those we are waiting for, and to those who are waiting for us.” That idea of traveling is throughout the book. That idea of hope and waiting and desire is in the book in every story. I feel like those are definitely elements that as human beings we are searching for in the divine; a sense of place, a sense of self. We hope that God or something, Earth, is guiding us towards our true fate, and I think my characters are all seeking that. They seek for it in people’s bodies; they seek for it in ideas of home. But, ultimately, I think they are seeking upwards, they are seeking for it in a much grander way. I think we all are, regardless if we call it God or we just call it self. I think it’s a constant search for something that goes beyond the flesh.

FINK: Do you feel like you have a responsibility as a writer to address things politically?

YANIQUE: I don’t think that all writers should feel this responsibility. I don’t think that all books must address bigger social issues, but I feel I need to and that’s just a personal decision and a personal choice. It’s not even a decision, more of a compulsion. It may come from the fact that I’m a woman writer, a woman of color. I think that when people think of the Virgin Islands, they don’t think of art. They don’t think of what the humans are up to; they think “Oh, what are the palm trees up to? What’s the beach up to?” I am aware that by being “up to” something, by being an artist, I’m asking the world to see the Virgin Islands as a place that creates art, a place where the human beings are “up to” stuff. I feel like I can’t help that. It’s

not something that I go off into my stories intending to do, but I feel like because that's the kind of person I am, it cannot be helped.

FINK: Do you think about the reader as you're writing?

YANIQUE: In my first draft, I do not at all. If I did, it would inhibit me. If I thought that my aunt is going to read this and be mad at me, or my husband would read this and want to know why I'm writing about this husband in this way, then I wouldn't write. It would be a kind of self-censorship. In the revision, I do think about the reader, not in a particular way, but a kind of highest version of myself, or maybe even of my grandmother. A high sophisticated version of the best reader I can think of. I want to honor that person. Not necessarily politically or personally, but I want to honor their intellect and honor their desire for discovery and honor their desire for magic and beauty. Because I think that as a writer, you bring your story two-thirds and the reader brings the other bit. Part of my job as a writer is to know what the reader might do, or at least to respect what the reader might be up to.

FINK: Thanks so much for talking with us. It was a delight to spend some time with you. I wish you the best on your current work and the reading tonight.

YANIQUE: Thank you, it was a pleasure. See you at the reading tonight.

## *Author and Artist Biographies*

**Aeryn Arquette** was born in Northern California and moved to Maine in 2004, where she attended 8th grade and high school, before attending Gonzaga in 2009. She enjoys photography and reading fantasy-fiction books. She plans move to Ireland after graduating and hopefully pursue a career in photography or some other fine art medium.

**Tien Butts** is a senior Fine Arts major and Promotion major from San Diego, California. In her spare time, she enjoys baking, listening to music, blogging, and sewing. After graduating, she hopes to pursue graphic design or photography.

**Kevin P. Carroll** is a senior majoring in Criminal Justice and Psychology. From Tacoma, Washington, he plans on attending law school after graduation. In his free time he practices Goju-Ryu karate and also enjoys calligraphing and thinking.

**Erin Dempsey** is a junior studying English and Secondary Education. She is proud to live in Denver, Colorado. She loves to travel, quote people far wiser than herself, any bowl of pho placed before her, and her family.

**Jacey Fink** is a senior on the English Writing Track. From Buffalo, Wyoming she hopes to graduate and intern for a publishing company before attending graduate school to earn an MFA in Creative Writing. She enjoys collaging in her spare time.



**Caitlin LeBrun** is a junior studying Special Education. After graduating, she hopes to teach in a social skills classroom for children with autism. She is from Pasco, Washington and likes yoga, black coffee, and the new P.O.S album.

**Torrey Smith** is a junior on the English Writing Track. From Centennial, Colorado she hopes to graduate, work in publishing, and eventually attend graduate school to earn an MFA Creative Writing. She enjoys playing her guitar, writing, and watching far too much television in her spare time.

**Haley Swanson** is a junior earning her degree in English Literature with minors in Creative Writing and Philosophy. After graduating she hopes to be a production editor for a publishing house.

**Lindsay Waltner** is a senior English Writing Track and Studio Art major from Woodinville, Washington. Aside from writing and oil painting, she enjoys cooking and crafting in her spare time. After graduating, she hopes to travel.

**Virginia Whalen** is a senior from Spokane, WA. She is studying psychology and intends to pursue a career in counseling. When not taking photos, she is often found running. Once in awhile, she combines the two.

**Wenyu Zhang** is who exists out in the world to guarantee the frame of this bio. Remix me in the limits of these words here. I just want to be whole. A nomad has recently realized “Has someone, however, actually forgotten Being? Yes: anyone who really thinks that Being has really been forgotten.” Because “swimming in the ocean, it is impossible to see how big it is”; my future. Everything is translation. Wenyu is a senior on the English Writing Track.

# submissions

To be considered for publication in our Spring 2013 edition, please submit poetry, prose (guideline of 3,500 words or less), and visual arts such as etching, woodcut or screen prints, drawings, photographs, collages, and ceramics by emailing them to [reflection@gonzaga.edu](mailto:reflection@gonzaga.edu). Please contact Reflection if you are concerned about submitting your visual artwork. We will provide a representative to photograph your work upon request.

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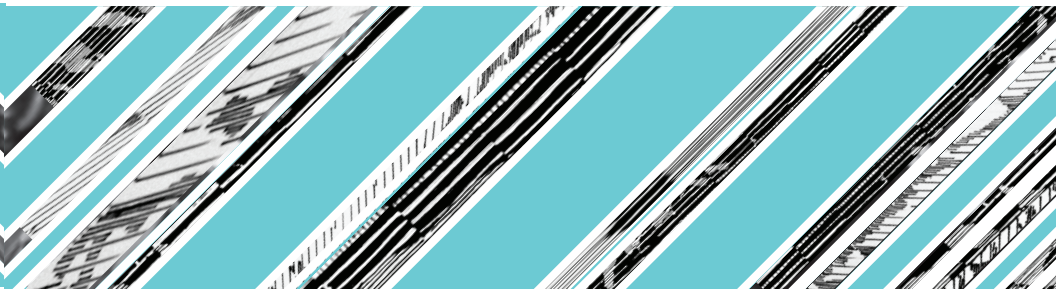
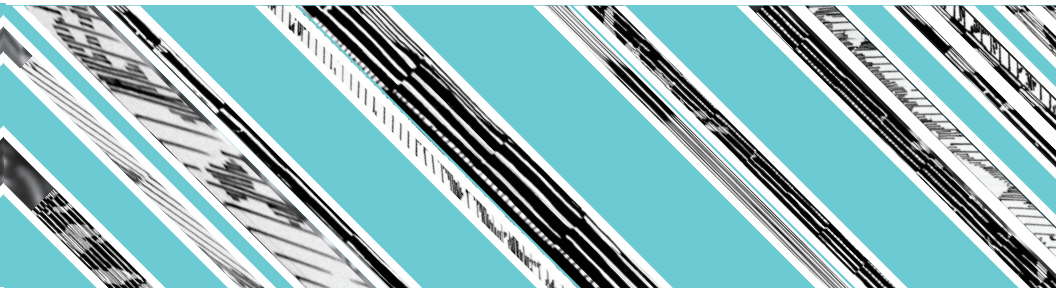
The deadline for the Spring 2013 edition is February 15th, 2013.

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Reflection looks forward to hearing from all Gonzaga University community members including undergraduate students, alumni, graduate students, and staff from all areas of the university.



gonzaga's art and literature publication | fall 2012



aeryn arquett  
tien butts  
kevin p carroll  
erin dempsey  
jacey fink  
cailtin lebrun  
torrey smith  
haley swanson  
lindsay waltner  
virginia whalen  
wenyu zhang

